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OBSERVATIONS ON LATIN POETS

BY J. P. POSTGATE

1. On Terence *Andria* 971-72:

PA. Nec mora ullast quin iam uxorem ducam. CH. Num ille somniat ea quae uigilans uoluit? PA. tum de puero, Daue DA. a, desine. solus est quem diligant di?

Mr. Keith Preston has done well to draw attention to this passage, which all the editions that I have seen leave without proper comment; but here, I fear, his service stops. He would identify the thought in the words of Charinus with that in Menander: "Ἀθλα Δράματα (Fr. 734K.): ἀ γὰρ μεθ' ἡμέραν τις ἐσποῦδασε | ταῦτ' εἶδε νύκτωρ. But for an exact parallel to the comic fragment we shall look not to our passage, as I will show presently, but to Accius *Fab. praetext.* (*Brutus* ii) 29R.: "Rex, quae in uita usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, uident, | quaeque agunt *uigilantes* agitantque, ea si cui *in somno* accidunt, | minus mirum est," or to Lucretius iv. 962 ff.: "et quo quisque fere studio deuinctus adhaeret | aut quibus in rebus multum sumus ante morati | atque in ea ratione fuit contenta magis mens, | *in somnis* eadem plerumque uidemur obire," with the copious illustration that follows, much of it no doubt from Greek sources. Compare with 991 ff.: "uenantumque canes in molli saepe quiete," *e.q.s.*, with Aesch. *Eum.* 131 f.: ὄναρ διώκεις θῆρα κλαγγαίνεις θ' ἄπερ | κίων μέριμναν οὔποτ' ἐκλιπὼν πόνου.

Nor does Plautus *Miles Gl.* 393 f.: "satin eadem *uigilanti* expetunt quae in somnis uisa memoras? | eu hercle praesens somnium" show "the converse of this idea" (i.e., the one attributed to Terence). Plautus makes allusion to the general belief that dreams mislead, being *uana* (Lygdamus [Tib. iii.] 4. 7 ff.), or going by contraries (Lucan vii. 21), whereas this dream "comes home"; cf. Livy ii. 36, especially §§ 5, 6: "praesentior . . . repraesentatas."

Let us however compare passages which are really parallel in expression; and among these Plautus *Amph.* 697 f.: "AM. quaeue *uigilans* somniat? | AL. equidem ecastor uigilo et uigilans id quod

factum est fabulor." *Capt.* 848: "hic *uigilans somniat*." *Pseud.* 385 f.: "ad eam rem usust hominen astutum doctum cautum et callidum, | qui imperata efecta reddat, non qui *uigilans dormiat*." Publius Syrus 14: "amans quod suspicatur *uigilans somniat*." Lucretius iii. 1047 f.: "qui *somno* partem maiorem conteris aevi | et *uigilans stertis* nec *somnia* cernere cessas."¹ Quintilian *Inst.* vi. 2. 30: inter otia animorum et spes inanes et uelut quaedam *somnia uigilantium*. It is evident then that in the present passage also *uigilans* belongs to *somniat* and does not belong to *uoluit* and that the words mean not "Is he dreaming what he desired when awake?" but "Is he dreaming awake of what he desired?" as in the line of P. Syrus above. This involves the assumption of a hyperbaton, in character not unlike the one in Catullus 66. 77 f.: "quicum ego, dum uirgo *quondam* fuit omnibus expers | unguentis, una milia multa bibi" (discussed in *Class. Phil.*, III, 257 ff.) where *quondam* appears in a clause, *dum uirgo fuit*, to which it does not belong. Whether the hyperbaton here is too harsh to be possible, modern feeling by itself can hardly decide. The real and, in fact, the sole question is whether the mental association of the members in the phrase *uigilans somniat* was to a Roman sufficiently strong to neutralize the effect of their separation. If not, *uigilans* must be moved in front of *ea quae*.

2. On Lucretius iii. 391 ff.:

usque adeo prius est in nobis multa ciendum
quam primordia sentiscant concussa animai
semina corporibus nostris inmixta per artus
et quam in his interuallis tuditantia possint
concursare coire et dissultare uicissim.

Such has been the order of the lines in general acceptance since Munro in his third edition retransposed the second and third. The return to the arrangement of the MSS has been stoutly defended against Brieger's dissent by Giussani in his note on the passage. On one, and this a vital point, the meaning of *multa*, there is division among the interpreters. Munro, as Goebel before him and Heinze after him, construed this with *primordia*. Giussani understood it as

¹ The phrase, which is unquestionably proverbial, is given an ironical twist in Juvenal i. 57: "doctus et ad calicem uigilanti stertere naso" (of a sham sleeper).

the substantival object of *ciendum (est)*, being thus the equivalent of *multas res*. The sense arrived at is seen in Mr. Bailey's translation: "Indeed so many *things* must first be stirred in us before the seeds of soul mingled with our bodies throughout our frame feel that the first beginnings have been shaken, and before they can by jostling with their due spaces set between rush together, unite and leap back in turn." Now it must be seriously doubted if the word can be taken thus. After a diligent search I can find no instance of such a use of *multa* in application to the atoms. *Semina* (or the like) is always expressed (*semina multa* vi. 498, 508, 520, 898, and, I daresay, elsewhere) or else easily supplied from the context. In vi. 348 f.: "incolumisque uenit per *res* atque integra transit | multa," objects are meant, *not* atoms. Unless then the advocates of the MS order of the verses wish to be driven on to the Munronian construction, against which their interpretation is a revolt, they must revise this translation and take *ciendum est multa*, not as "many things must be stirred," but with a different sense of the accusative, "there must be many *strivings*." This use is possible grammatically; whether Lucretius would have inclined to it, I do not know. But there is more to come. Giussani says: "Costr. *multa ciendum est (vide i. 111) priusquam animai sentiscant primordia (corporis) concussa*." Is this relevant? Lucretius is concerned with the affections of the atoms themselves, *not* with their perception of the motions of the atoms of body. Heinze (*ad loc.*) endeavors to escape the difficulty by supposing that "to observe the shaking" means "to participate" in "that shaking." Need this be refuted? I say nothing of the verbal ambiguity of a sentence which ought grammatically to mean "*quam concussa animai primordia sentiscant inmixta per artus corporibus nostris semina*." It is no doubt considered to be Lucretian. There appears to be no reason for these gymnastics if we remember that *sentiscere* like *sentire* (of the body, l. 350) can be used of either of the joint producers of sensation.

Against the transposition of the older editions Giussani raises the objection that it is destitute of sense. First he asserts that *semina* are "atoms of body," and then he asks what is the meaning of "the addition *corporibus nostris inmixta per artus*?" The atoms of the body scattered and mingled in the body?" Those words are no

"addition" to *semina*. They refer, as Giussani rightly observes, to the atoms of the soul, that is, to *primordia animai* with which *inmixta* agrees. A slight repunctuation alone is required and the lines should run:

393 usque adeo prius est in nobis multa ciendum
 semina, corporibus nostris inmixta per artus
 quam primordia sentiscant concussa animai
 et quam in his interuallis tuditantia possint
 concursare coire et dissultare uicissim.

It may be added that to a Roman the contrasting positions of *corporibus . . . animai* would redeem the sentence from any charge of obscurity.

Some further arguments of Giussani I quite fail to comprehend. He says that *in his interuallis*, which means "the intervening distances being such as I have said" (378-80), is clearer if it can be referred to a *concussa primordia corporis* which has preceded. But again the point is not the space through which the atoms of body move but the distance between the atoms of soul, the subject to *possint* being of course *primordia animai*. Nor is his remark that, if *concussa* are the atoms of soul, *sentiscant*, which is "a vague feeling (cf. iv. 584), a beginning of feeling," any happier. Lucretius is perfectly accurate in taking as his *terminus ad quem* the moment when sensation begins. Whether Lucretius intended *concussa sentiscant* to mean "be shaken and (so) feel," or to mean "feel they are shaken," cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2. 377: "sensit medios delapsus in hostis," can perhaps hardly be determined and is, for our present purpose, immaterial.¹

Lastly, I do not know why *semina* is "più sottile" than *primordia* and therefore more suitable to the *anima*. The passages cited above for *semina* do not support this contention.

3. On Lucretius iii. 894-930:

Whatever view may be taken of the probability of the following proposal, it will, I trust, be judged by its intention, that is, as an attempt to remove a blemish from a part of the poem of Lucretius in which his genius and powers of literary expression reach what is perhaps their culminating point.

¹ For myself I prefer the former.

To analyze its content. The section immediately preceding (870-93) has urged the unreason of man's unspoken resentment against the Fate which decrees that his body should be destroyed after life has left it. Men affect to grant that death obliterates all sensation; but their chafing at the thought of lying unburied or being devoured by beasts of prey shows that the admission is at bottom insincere. After noting the illogicality of a complaint which finds it ill that the lifeless corse is mauled by the devouring jaws of the creatures of the wild, while it ignores what should be the equal physical discomforts of cremation or burial (888-93), the poet has a paragraph which deals with the counts of the indictment leveled against death as the ender of the warm personal human existence. It is couched in dramatic form—the alternation of plaint and answer. In lines 894 ff. we have: "Iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta neque uxor | optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati | praeripere," etc. The answer is given in 900 f.: "You will lose all this, it is true; but you will never for a moment feel the loss." In the next following lines (902-11) he stigmatizes as irrational the extravagant grief of survivors for the dead: "Forever shall we mourn the lost." Why should you when death is nothing worse than sleep and rest? "illud ab hoc igitur quaerendum est, quid sit amari | tanto opere, ad somnum si res redit atque quietem | cur quisquam aeterno possit tabescere luctu" (909-11).

What follows next (912-18) may be most conveniently given in a translation:

This also men often do when they lie at table and the cup is in their hands and garlands shade their brows; from the heart they say: "Brief is the hour of manikins' enjoyment; soon will it be over nor thereafter may we ever call it back." As though in death this were to be among the chiefest of their ills that thirst and parching drought would burn the wretches or yearning for aught outside beset them."

The next 12 lines (919-30) pursue the analogy from sleep. We never feel the lack of consciousness when we are sleeping; why then should it trouble us when dead? "nec sibi enim quisquam tum se uitamque requirit, | cum pariter mens et corpus sopita quiescant" (919 f.) . . . "multo igitur mortem minus ad nos esse putandumst | si minus esse potest quam quod nil esse uidemus" (926 f.). The

passage concludes with the words: “nec quisquam *expergitus* exstat | frigida quem semel est uitai pausa secuta” (929, 930).

Let us add, to complete our survey, that in 931 ff. Lucretius takes up a different topic and puts into the mouth of Nature herself a reproof of the man who murmurs against her decrees when he has had all that she or life can give: “denique si uocem rerum natura repente | mittat et hoc alicui nostrum sic increpet ipsa | ‘quid tibi,’” etc.

Now I think a reader who refuses to allow habit or prejudice to blind him will feel that there is something unsatisfactory here—that the effect of the literary finish of the whole passage is marred by the incoherence in the order of its components.

The concluding lines of 894–911 are seen to be obviously connected with the subject of 919–30, and the transposition by Susemihl, adopted by Giussani and others, would join together again what the scribes have set asunder. But to move the twelve lines 919–30 to follow 911 only makes the incoherence and lack of symmetry more glaring in the case of 912–18. Nor, again, does it cure another fault in the context—the great abruptness (which a classical friend told me he had always felt) of the present opening of 894 ff. As Brieger then has seen, 912–18 are out of place.

A change, at least as easy as that of Susemihl, if not easier, will put both evils right; and I will give the readers of *Classical Philology* the first opportunity of seeing the lines where we must think Lucretius wrote them, by placing 912–18 between 893 and 894:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 912 | Hoc etiam faciunt ubi discubere tenentque
pocula saepe homines et inumbrant ora coronis
ex animo ut dicant “breuis hic est fructus homullis |
| 915 | iam fuerit neque post umquam reuocare licebit.”
tamquam in morte mali cum primis hoc sit eorum,
quod sitis exurat miseros atque arida torres ¹ |
| 918 | aut aliae cuius desiderium insideat rei. |
| 894 | “iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta neque uxor
optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
praeripere et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent.
non poteris factis florentibus esse tuisque |

¹ I have printed Lachmann's conjecture *torres*, though its uncertainty cannot be denied, as giving the general sense.

- praesidium. misero misere" aiunt "omnia ademit
 una dies infesta tibi tot praemia uitae."
 900 illud in his rebus non addunt "nec tibi earum
 iam rerum desiderium super insidet una."
 quod bene si uideant animo dictisque sequantur,
 dissoluant animi magno se angore metuque.
 "tu quidem ut es leto sopitus, sic eris, aevi
 905 quod superest, cunctis priuatu' doloribus aegris.
 at nos horifico cinefactum te prope busto
 insatiabiliter defleuimus aeternumque
 nulla dies nobis maerorem e pectore demet."
 illud ab hoc igitur quaerendum est quid sit amari
 tanto opere, ad somnum si res redit atque quietem,
 911 cur quisquam aeterno possit tabescere luctu.
 919 nec sibi enim quisquam tum se uitamque requirit,
 920 cum pariter mens et corpus sopita quiescunt.
 nam licet aeternum per nos sic esse soporem
 nec desiderium nostri nos adfcit ullum.
 et tamen haudquaquam nostros tunc illa per artus
 longe ab sensiferis primordia motibus errant,
 925 cum correptus homo ex somno se colligit ipse.
 multo igitur mortem minus ad nos esse putandumst
 si minus esse potest quam quod nil esse uidemus;
 maior enim turbae disiectus materiai
 consequitur leto nec quisquam expergitus exstat
 frigida quem semel est uitai pausa secuta.
 denique si uocem rerum natura repente
 mittat, *e.g.s.*

The gain to the poet I would gladly leave to the appreciation of my readers. But there are some few points upon which a word is wanted. The confusion of thought through which men in spite of their disclaimers attribute sentience to the dead (870-93) crops up again in the outspoken complaints of after-dinner sentiment. Wine and conviviality suggest to these self-pitiers the thirst of after-death and its other deprivations. After disposing of these phantoms of physical discomfort, Lucretius passes to deal with the imaginations of non-material loss. He urges the same argument as before—and let us note the verbal similarity of 918 and 901—there can be no hurt because there is no consciousness of hurt. Once more going back to the professions whose insincerity he had at the outset exposed, in an

ironical vein, which appears to have escaped the observation of some,¹ he assails the exaggerations of an immoderate grief. And, after placing its inconsistency in a vivid light, he concludes his subject by offering a scientific proof.

One small point to end with. More than one Lucretian scholar seems to have gone wrong over the *tunc . . . errant cum*, in 923 ff. So I will just say what it means. It is simply this: "The first beginnings *are* not *straying* far (or, are not far astray) at the *very* time of waking." To take it otherwise is to make a difficulty. The act of waking takes *some* time.

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¹ As of Heinze, who, arguing, on v. 909, against bringing 911 and 919-30 together, says that it would be quite superfluous and absurd to append to the expression of the complainer's view, *eris priuatus doloribus*, a thoroughgoing demonstration of the same. But it is *not* his view, as Lucretius has already shown at length 870 ff., nor is his pretense of following it a reason why Lucretius should delay his own proof.